

### *Representatives from WBMC, WSMR and Fort Bliss Discuss New Military Mental Health Screening Program*

Ft. Bliss, TX – Today, Congressman Teague met with military liaisons from White Sands Missile Range, William Beaumont Medical Center and Ft. Bliss to discuss mental health care in the military and how to best implement new post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) provisions recently signed into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The legislation establishes a mandatory post-deployment mental health assessment that provides face-to-face screening between a soldier and a mental health practitioner to all troops 60 days before deployment and upon returning from combat, a program Congressman Teague advocated for in a bill he introduced earlier this year.

The round table discussion focused on obstacles the new program might encounter and establishing best practices and solutions to those problems. The group also discussed current mental health programs as well as their concerns about the lack of mental health professionals, the diagnostic and treatment process for PTSD, and the progress made towards breaking down the stigma of mental health in the military.

“There has never been a more pressing need to address mental health care for our servicemen and women. As our military commitments overseas continue, the physical, mental and emotional burden placed on our troops and returning veterans only continues to grow,” said Congressman Harry Teague, a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. “Today’s

meeting provided the forum for an open, honest discussion on where we stand now in the fight on PTSD and how we can improve and best move forward with this new mental health screening program.”

The meeting came amid rising concerns that undiagnosed and untreated PTSD cases are leading to severe mental health issues and in some cases suicide. In an effort to improve quality of life for returning combat veterans and ease the adjustment to civilian life, Congressman Teague introduced the Kyle Barthel Veterans and Service Members Mental Health Screening Act earlier this year. The bill, named in honor of a Las Cruces who struggled with PTSD and ultimately took his own life after returning from combat, calls for mandatory and confidential mental health assessments for service members

White Sands Chief of Staff Daniel Hicks, Chief of Primary Care and Community Medicine for William Beaumont Medical Center Dr. Melissa Molina, and Ft. Bliss Protocol Direct Kelly Cotter joined Congressman Teague at Ft. Bliss, an Army installation that deploys and receives troops arriving back from theater. It also serves as a regional hub for medical care to the majority of servicemen and women southern New Mexico.

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